

THE RECRUITMENT OF HONORS STUDENTS
AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY:
APPLYING REALISTIC JOB PREVIEW CONCEPTS TO COLLEGE

A Thesis

By

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John P. Wanous", is written over a horizontal line.

ABSTRACT

Realistic Job Previews (RJPs) are any method to give recruits a balanced picture of the job. It can include brochures, videos, or personal presentations that present both positive and negative aspects of the job. RJPs can be used as part of the recruitment process before an offer is accepted or as part of the orientation or socialization process after the offer has been accepted. Since new employees (and college students) usually have inflated ideas of a new job (and new school), RJPs seek to reduce exaggerated expectations.

RJP concepts can be applied to the recruitment of Honors students at The Ohio State University in order to better prepare students for the realities of life at OSU, thus proactively reducing turnover (both through students leaving the university completely and through students losing honors status), allowing students to develop coping mechanisms, and providing them with more information so they can make a better informed decision and select OSU.

With the implementation of the Academic Plan and its outlined goals towards academic excellence, Ohio State Honors students will be a target of heavier recruitment. Because of the importance of Honors student recruitment, there is potential to try to "sell" Ohio State in an effort to gain as many as possible. However, only providing positive aspects of the university can backfire in higher turnover and dissatisfied students.

How can RJP theory be applied to college recruitment? Following the guidelines provided in Wanous's "Installing a Realistic Job Preview: Ten Tough Choices," reviewing the existing recruitment process, and evaluating current students views of recruitment information, suggestions are made to increase the "realism" in recruitment.

In order to determine *what* to implement and *how* to implement "Realistic Job Preview" theory in the recruitment of honors students at The Ohio State University, two tasks needed to be completed. First, the issues and decisions surrounding the implementation needed to be evaluated and addressed using current methods and the climate at the University. Second, the method of the collection of information regarding current processes and the "reality" of life as an undergraduate honors student needed to be determined (which is actually incorporated in the above).

The current process involves students entering three different "queues" in order to learn about the Honors option through the Honors & Scholars Program. Each has a different track, but much of the materials are shared. The current process has been in existence for approximately seven years, with one notable change. It is "informal" in the sense that the steps are not expressly written down anywhere.

The Ohio State University Honors Program should adapt "Realistic Job Preview" concepts in the recruitment of Honors students, calling it "Realistic College Preview." Adapting these concepts proactively (before a turnover problem develops) will lead to lower turnover and better adapted students.

The recommendations are made as a proactive measure in response to the increased importance of recruiting and retaining Honors students in response to the Academic Plan. The diagnosis was unstructured with information obtained through

formal and informal interviews, personal anecdotes, and experiences. The content should be judgmental to reflect "reality" and be intensive, so that the program can still be sold, but students are still given enough information to make an informed decision facilitating self-selection. The chosen presentation medium should be written and one-to-one, taking advantage of the best of both worlds. The message should be delivered by incumbents (current Honors students). The "Realistic College Preview" will be given early in the process in order to optimize the time students have to make informed college decisions. The concepts should be implemented as policy because a study would waste time and money and due to the number of incoming students, would not yield results backing up the suggestions and research. Finally, it is recommended that Ohio State Honors begin tracking the recruitment and retention of Honors students. In addition to tracking OSU results, it is also suggested that OSU benchmark itself against other institutions.

Two specific recommendations are made in regards to including peer mentors during recruitment and allowing Honors Ambassadors to share more personal experiences. Other recommendations are made for further research.

Dedicated to all those who work too hard and without recognition.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Does The Ohio State University give a “realistic preview” of the life of an undergraduate honors student? In an effort to improve the overall quality of the student body at The Ohio State University, Honors students are heavily recruited, just as “the best and the brightest” are sought in business. With the implementation of the Academic Plan, the recruitment and retention of honors students has and will continue to become an even more poignant issue.

Currently, students are formally given a preview of what to expect at OSU during recruitment through on-campus visits, brochures, the OSU website, letters, and other personal communication with staff members and volunteers associated with the program. Informally, prospective students receive information through friends, family, media publications, and alumni. How well does this allow potential students to select OSU? How well does this allow students to adjust their expectations? How well does it prepare students to cope with disappointments or negative aspects that they may encounter?

This work will seek to evaluate the recruitment process of Honors students at The Ohio State University from the standpoint of its “realism.” This work is interested in suggesting a model for recruitment, which incorporates both positive and negative aspects of life as an undergraduate at OSU. Through interviews, both formal and

informal, anecdotes, and personal experiences, information was collected in order to implement “Realistic Job Preview”(RJP) concepts.

Realistic Job Previews (RJPs) are any method to give recruits a balanced picture of the job. It can include brochures, videos, or personal presentations that present both positive and negative aspects of the job. RJPs can be used as part of the recruitment process before an offer is accepted or as part of the orientation or socialization process after the offer has been accepted. Since new employees (and college students) usually have inflated ideas of a new job (and new school), RJPs seek to reduce exaggerated expectations.

RJPs have been applied to both business and the military. They have been shown to reduce turnover by 12% for organizations with a 50% survival rate and 6% for organizations with an 80% survival rate (Premack and Wanous, 1985). Although the concept of Realistic Job Previews has been in existence since the mid-50s, significance advancement was not seen until the 1970s. John Wanous conducted the first published review in 1977; the research concluded the fact that RJPs did not damage a company’s ability to recruit newcomers, as well as those benefits described above. Numerous studies have been conducted through the 1990s essentially reaching similar conclusions.

To be realized in the next five years, the Academic Plan is The Ohio State University’s initial roadmap for the journey to academic excellence. The Plan outlines the strategy and cost for becoming one of the best public universities in the country. It recognizes to achieve academic excellence that OSU must upgrade the achievement level of the undergraduate student body. Throughout the Plan, it is stressed that OSU must

recruit and retain to graduation an excellent and diverse undergraduate student body. It states:

“More talented and better-prepared students require less remediation, face fewer academic difficulties, and graduate in higher numbers and in a shorter time span. Better-prepared students also help attract better faculty, grants, and awards and enhance the University’s academic reputation.”
(www.osu.edu/academicplan.html)

Ohio State Honors students exemplify these traits and description; therefore, they will be a target of heavier recruitment. Because of the importance of Honors student recruitment, there is potential to try to “sell” Ohio State in an effort to gain as many as possible. However, only providing positive aspects of the university can backfire in higher turnover and dissatisfied students.

“Realistic Job Preview” concepts can be applied to the recruitment of Honors students in order to better prepare students for the realities of life at OSU, thus proactively reducing turnover (both through students leaving the university completely and through students losing honors status), allowing students to develop coping mechanisms, and providing them with more information so they can make a better informed decision and select OSU.

How can RJP theory be applied to college recruitment? Following the guidelines provided in Wanous’s “Installing a Realistic Job Preview: Ten Tough Choices,” reviewing the existing recruitment process, and evaluating current students views of recruitment information, suggestions are made to increase the “realism” in recruitment.

CHAPTER 2: REALISTIC JOB PREVIEW BACKGROUND AND APPLICABILITY TO COLLEGE RECRUITMENT

What are Realistic Job Previews?

The term “Realistic Job Preview” is an ample description of a device that seeks to give a more complete picture of a position and the organization before a candidate accepts the position. RJPs take the form of videos, brochures, and live presentations. The goal of RJPs is to offer candidates a more complete picture of a position, including previously unknown negative information. With this information, candidates can make better-informed job decisions. In addition, the realistic preview serves to “reduce overly optimistic expectations” of new or potential employees since they “usually have inflated ideas or expectations about what the job involves” (Meglino and DeNisi, 1985). Realistic previews are a departure from traditional recruiting because the focus is not purely to sell the job.

Do RJPs work?

RJPs have been applied to business and the military. It has been shown to reduce turnover by 12% for organizations with a 50% survival rate (the rate at which employees stay at a firm) and 6% for organizations with an 80% survival rate (Wanous, 1989). Although the concept of Realistic Job Previews has been in existence since the mid-50s, significant advancement in research and use was not seen until the 1970s. John Wanous conducted the first published review in 1977; the noticeable conclusions included the fact

that RJPs did not damage company's ability to recruit newcomers, as well as those benefits described above. Numerous studies have been conducted through the 1990s essentially reaching similar conclusions.

Why do RJPs work?

Realistic previews work in a variety of ways, depending on presentation, timing, amount of negative information, and purpose of use. The most prevalent reason for usage is the allowance for self-selection – potential employees voluntarily stay or remove themselves from the selection process before the company makes selection decisions. With the additional presented negative material, the candidate may choose to select in or out, based on that negative information. However, some research shows that “some applicants can interpret the preview as a ‘personal challenge’ and may therefore be more likely to accept an offer of employment” (Meglino and DeNisi, 1985).

Due to the factual and negative aspects of the information presented, a realistic preview can shift a candidate's expectations. Because he has the negative information in advance, he can adjust his expectations of a position. He will not, therefore, experience the same level of dissatisfaction if he had discovered the negative information after accepting the position. “In psychological terms, the employee erects defenses against these negative events. Realistic previews allow these defenses to be erected earlier so that actual job events produce less dissatisfaction when they occur” (Meglino and DeNisi, 1985).

One of the reasons candidates experience less dissatisfaction is the feeling of having “choice.” They do not feel deceived, but feel better prepared to make the decision. Realistic previews “increase that person's perception of free choice” (Meglino

and DeNisi, 1985). The employee feels more committed to the course of action because he made the conscious decision to choose it and was able to do so with a more complete picture.

The last way that RJPs affect candidates is through the coping effect. Studies have shown that medical patients who were given a preview of the procedure and the pain involved experienced a more rapid recovery and few complications (Janis, 1958). The preview allowed the patients to develop coping mechanisms. Employees experience a similar anxiety or worry when beginning a new job; a realistic preview can allow the employee to develop coping mechanisms as well (Meglino and DeNisi, 1985).

What factors affect RJPs success?

The type of position affects the effectiveness of the preview. While jobs are perceived as attractive for numerous reasons, for the purpose of this study, the prestige of the organization and position play a significant role. When comparing studies done of turnover and realistic preview, it was discovered that positions with higher prestige, in this case a new cadet at West Point versus a gas station attendant, are affected positively by realistic previews. In other words, because being a new cadet holds prestige, a more accurate view provided by the preview reduced turnover. On the other hand, the study involving gas station attendants actually resulted in higher turnover. The incentives are just not the same (Meglino and DeNisi, 1985).

As discussed in the section “Do RJPs work?”, it is shown that an organization’s current turnover rates affect the success of a realistic preview. Job acceptance rates also affect the outcome. “A substantial increase in the rate of job acceptance resulted in a

twofold decrease in the turnover rate produced by the realistic preview” (Meglino and DeNisi, 1985).

In addition to the factors described above, two others to consider are the psychological contract and individual characteristics of applicants. Organizations that show they value new employees through invested time and energy help to create a psychological contract – an unwritten agreement between the company and the applicant in which terms are clear to both parties. These investments bind the new employee to the organization and thus, it affects the success of RJPs. The individual characteristics of the applicants, especially commitment, affect success rates. For this reason, the type of applicant needs to be evaluated prior to introducing a realistic preview. Applicants with higher commitment usually stick through the initial difficult periods because of this specific personality trait; therefore RJP appears more successful (Meglino and DeNisi, 1985).

What is the relation to college recruitment?

New employees and college freshman share many characteristics, experiences, feelings, fears, anxieties, and over inflated expectations of new organizations and experiences. Most likely they were forced to make a decision between two or more organizations, either college or firm, which attempt to secure the most desirable candidates. New employees and college freshmen share the experiences of recruitment and orientation process. The purpose of the selection process they go through is to determine the best candidates and then secure them. With this in mind, often the negative aspects are hidden or pushed aside in order to “sell” to position to the most qualified.

Freedom of choice, coping effect and lowered expectations all apply to college applicants, as well as job applicants. They experience similar choices and the more information provided, the more educated the choice will be. College recruits provided with a realistic picture can also self-select and experience appropriately lowered expectations, leading to lower turnover. Like candidates and medical patients, college recruits often experience the coping effect. A realistic preview can offer them an opportunity to develop coping mechanisms.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

In order to determine *what* to implement and *how* to implement “Realistic Job Preview” theory in the recruitment of honors students at The Ohio State University, two tasks needed to be completed. First, the issues and decisions surrounding the implementation needed to be evaluated and addressed using current methods and the climate at the University. Second, the method of the collection of information regarding current processes and the “reality” of life as an undergraduate honors student needed to be determined (which is actually incorporated in the above).

Tough Choice #1: Getting Started – Reaction and Proaction

Implementing Realistic Job Preview concepts in the recruitment of honors students at The Ohio State University can be proactive or reactive. Approximately 1,200 honors students enter the honors program each year. At any given time, approximately 4,500 students have “Honors” status. With these numbers, approximately 300 “lost”, it can be argued that RJP theory could be implemented for reactive reasons. However, that argument would not be very successful due to the small number “lost” each year.

However, in light of the implementation of the Academic Plan, the admission standards will naturally rise as the quality of the academic programs rise. In addition, honors students are being more heavily recruited to enhance the quality of the student body, with special attention given to National Merit Scholars, National Achievement

Scholars and National Hispanic Scholars. The University feels that it is very important that these students are retained at Ohio State and in the Honors program. By implementing RJP concepts, these recruited students will be less likely to transfer to another university, they have a higher chance of developing coping mechanisms, and they will be provided with more information so they can make a better-informed decision and select OSU.

The proactive approach to implementing RJP concepts in the recruitment Honors students offers many benefits. It can be designed to prevent a retention problem before it really develops, therefore avoiding the large opportunity cost of lost associated with turnover and dissatisfied students. It will be difficult to convince administration of the Office of Admissions and the Honors & Scholars Center to take a proactive stance because a problem has not developed yet (depending on what they view as a “problem”). In addition, the results of the RJP implementation will be less poignant because RJP’s utility is lower if initial turnover rates are lower.

Tough Choice #2: Diagnosis – Structured or Unstructured

The structure of information collection can be structured or unstructured.

Information was collected and analyzed through a collection of interviews. Although a more structured approach offers more quantitative data, the unstructured approach offers numerous advantages. It provides a low cost method of collecting data. It also takes less time and resources to collect the information. I recognize that some might find the data unrepresentative. Wanous states, “I believe either approach can yield sufficiently valid data to construct a useful RJP” (Wanous, 121). Because of the nature of RJP, the information does not need to be extensive; it only needs to be “real.”

Information was collected initially through formal interviews, most often one-on-one; however, in two cases, a group of three was present for the discussion. The interviews were a discussion of the interviewee's recruitment experience. Thirty students were formally interviewed. Approximately 20 additional interviews took place informally with fellow honors students while discussing this study or the Honors Program. In addition, approximately five of those interviewed were Honors Ambassadors. Four students were National Merit, National Achievement, or National Hispanic Scholars. All students interviewed offered valuable insight into their personal recruitment experiences, in addition, and most importantly, regarding the information they wish they had been told.

A list of Honors students was obtained through a Honors & Scholars staff member; the list was generated from a group called "Leadership Ohio State." Leadership Ohio State is an organization composed of freshmen students, designed to introduce them to opportunities and experiences at the university. They represented Honors students from the previous four years. Individuals were emailed and invited to participate in this research. Thirty responded and times were set up to accommodate schedules.

All the students were asked the following questions, allowing time for explanation, appropriate follow-up questions and digressions:

1. Why did you choose The Ohio State University?
2. Describe your experience with the Honors Program prior to applying.
3. Did you visit campus? Describe the information you received and your general impressions.
4. What were three key things you really expected? And what was the outcome of those expectations?
5. What do you wish you had been told?
6. What are three pieces of information you would provide potential students with if they were considering the Honors Program?

Throughout the interviews, hand-written notes were taken. After the interviews, the information was compiled into a list of expectations. If the expectation or experience was mentioned at least three times, it was recorded in the list. The informal interviews served to confirm the information collected and clarified some nuances.

Tough Choices #3: Content – Descriptive or Judgmental

This decision determines how “real” the RJP is. I believe RJP at OSU should use judgmental information. It will show what satisfies and dissatisfies students. Because the objective is to increase “survival” at OSU, it is important to include the most important assets and liabilities of a particular situation and explicitly identify them as such. Judgmental information provides a “richer” view of life as an honors student for an incoming freshman. However, the material is seen as more subjective and possibly could be resisted by administration. It can include seemingly factual information, but also be more explicit about how current students feel about it.

Tough Choice #4: Content – Extensive or Intensive

Should the RJP include all relevant information or should it be more selective? Because of the nature of the information collection method chosen, the information will be intensive. Incoming freshman do not need to be told everything; the honors program at OSU still needs to be “sold.” Too much information would be overwhelming and would lead students to not choose OSU. Not enough information would defeat the purpose of implementing RJP theory; however, any additional information would assist in helping the candidate make a more informed decision.

Tough Choice #5: Content – High or Medium Negativity?

Like the decision above, the program still needs to be sold, so medium negativity serves these purposes best. While a high degree of negativity may be more effective in helping potential students self-select OSU, it has potential to negatively affect the selection rate. While turnover could be lower, the number of students who choose OSU might be less. In other words, a highly negative preview would not produce the desired outcome. In addition to potentially lowering turnover, a moderate amount of negativity will help students who attend OSU to develop coping mechanisms.

Tough Choice #6: Media Used: Written, Audio-Visual, or Face-to-Face

Realistic Job Preview concepts can be presented in a variety of ways: written materials like brochures, audio-visual forms like videos, or face-to-face encounters with incumbents. Face-to-face encounters present the most informal method of conveying such information. Written and audio-visual are more formal. In order to decide which method to use, it was necessary to first evaluate the current methods of recruitment.

In order to determine the current methods of recruitment of honors students, I met with an administrator in the Honors & Scholars Center. I also collected all of the written materials given to potential students during recruitment. In addition, I collected the materials given to Honors Ambassadors, a group of current Honors students who give housing tours to prospective students.

Tough Choice #7: Message Source: Actors or Incumbents

If the audio-visual method is used, the source of the message is important to consider. Because of the credibility of an incumbent and the low to no cost incurred, incumbents should be chosen.

Tough Choice # 8: Timing: Late or Early

Realistic Job Preview concepts can be introduced early or late in the recruitment process. However, because OSU does not use a tiered selection method, “late” and “early” do not have the same meaning. “Early” and “late” are related to the chronology of the recruitment process. While the current recruitment process will be discussed in Chapter 4, it is important to note that “early” means Fall Quarter and “late” means beginning of Spring Quarter. For a realistic college preview to be successful, it is important that it occurs early in the process. Once again, it will be discussed in Chapter 4, but it is important to note the three different paths available during recruitment and at which point the Realistic College Preview (RCP) is added. The earlier the RCP is introduced, the earlier it can impact the candidate’s selection.

Unlike realistic job preview and business implementation, the pool does not get smaller; therefore, any benefits gained from such are not realized in college recruitment at OSU.

Tough Choice # 9: Getting Started: Pilot Study or Policy

It is difficult to measure, realize, and administer a pilot study within the Honors Program. Because of the small amount of students admitted to the program yearly (approximately 1200) and because of the choice to conduct the study proactively, the results would be limited and would not substantiate the validity of RCP. In addition, because of the yearly selection times and the nature of university selection, the pilot study would take time too much time; immediate results would not exist. The opportunity cost would be too great. It would be wiser to implement immediate policy; an RJP concepts implemented could only aid in self-selection. In addition to the practical reasons, one

does not need to create a control group, as in the pilot study; therefore, a group is not being told all the available information.

Tough Choice #10: Sharing Results: Proprietary Secret or Disseminate Information

This choice is nearly mute at The Ohio State University. All retention information is available to the public. However, specific information concerning honors is not available. In addition, the Honors & Scholars Program does not formally track retention, nor does it benchmark against other competing institutions. The information, while meritorious to track, would best be shared with those involved with recruitment, not all the Honors students at OSU.

CHAPTER 4: THE RESULTS

The results presented below relate to two things: the current process of recruitment and information collected regarding the “reality” of the honors program.

The Current Process

Students enter three different “queues” in order to learn about the Honors option through the Honors & Scholars Program. Each has a different track, but much of the materials are shared. The current process has been in existence for approximately seven years, with one notable change. It is “informal” in the sense that the steps are not expressly written down anywhere. It is merely “the way things have always been done.”

Queue #1

Step One: Students personally request information regarding the honors program.

Various methods include:

- Sending in an interest card obtained at a college fair, guidance counselor office, or general OSU application packet
- Requesting information via telephone
- Requesting information via email osuhons@osu.edu
- Requesting information in person by visiting:

University Honors & Scholars Center
Kuhn Honors & Scholars House
220 West 12th Avenue
Columbus OH 43210

Step Two: The staff at Honors sends the interested party the following information:

- A letter confirming the receipt of interest and thanking the interested party for his/her interest
- Honors Visit Request Form (appendix X)
- Application for Honors Affiliation
- Honors brochure (Appendix X)

Step Three A: The student can choose to visit campus. A visit consists of the following:

- An Honors Overview with one of University Honors & Scholars staff members
- A tour of one of five Honors residence halls with an Honors Ambassador

In addition, two optional appointments can be scheduled:

- Specified Academic Area, an appointment with a staff or faculty person in the academic department or college (1 hour)
- Admissions Campus Tour given by a University Ambassador (2 hours)

Step Three B: The student can opt not to visit campus.

Step Four A: The student can choose to complete and return the Application for Honors Affiliation. It is a separate application that must be completed after applying to The Ohio State University.

Step Four B: The student chooses not to complete the Application for Honors Affiliation. At which time, unless entering a different queue, the student no longer receives contact from the Honors & Scholars Program.

Step Five: If the student completes an Application for Honors Affiliation, he/she is notified regarding his/her status with Ohio State Honors. It takes approximately four weeks from the receipt of the Application for Honors Affiliation.

Queue #2:

Step One: The Honors & Scholars Program receives the names of National Merit, National Achievement, and National Hispanic finalists and semi-finalists.

Step Two: Qualifiers are sent a letter in Fall quarter congratulating them on their scores and introducing them to Ohio State Honors. In the correspondence is included an Honors Visit Request form and an invitation to National Merit Day, held early in November.

Step Three: The student can choose a separate Honors visit or can choose to attend National Merit Day. National Merit Day is essentially a larger scale Honors Visit, including:

- An Honors overview with a University Honors & Scholars staff member (individual)
- A tour of one of five Honors residence halls led by an Honors Ambassador (group)
- A presentation given by individual colleges of interest (group)
- An Admissions Campus tour given by a University Ambassador
- Lunch with a current student and faculty member of specified academic area of interest (group)

Students are provided with an application at this point. The Honors visit for a National Merit, National Achievement, or National Hispanic qualifiers is identical to the regular Honors visit, but it includes an individual lunch at the Faculty Club with a current student, academic area of interest faculty member, and a staff member from Honors & Scholars.

Step Four: Students are sent a follow-up letter, thanking them for the visit and wishing them luck in their college selection.

Step Five: Students are called during Winter Quarter to discuss how selection is going.

Step Six: If potential students are “on the fence,” they are invited to attend a dinner hosted in their geographical region.

Queue #3

Step One: The Honors & Scholars Center request the names of all students who receive a certain target score on the ACT.

Step Two: The potential students are sent a letter introducing them to Ohio State Honors. Included in the correspondence are a visit form and an Honors Brochure.

There are two differences between Queue #1 and Queue #3:

1. An Application for Honors Affiliation is sent to the potential students in Queue #1
2. Potential recruits in Queue #1 request the information and the potential students in Queue #3 are sent the information based on their ACT scores.

It is important to note that potential students in Queue #2 are the most heavily recruited.

More time, effort, and resources are invested in the recruitment of these students.

To summarize, potential recruits for The Ohio State University Honors & Scholars Program officially receive information in two forms:

Written forms include: Ohio State Honors brochure (Appendix X), Honors Visit Request Form, Application for Honors Affiliation, and the letter received (depending on the queue).

One-on-one forms include: Housing Tour given by Honors Ambassador, meeting with Honors staff member, and in addition for Queue #2: lunch with a staff member, student, and person representing students academic interest, the phone call in Winter Quarter, and possible geographic dinner.

Information provided in written forms is fixed. However, information given by individuals during tours, meals, and during the overview is not guaranteed to be consistent, especially considering the variables of different staff members, Honors Ambassadors, faculty members, and the potential students themselves.

Summary of Interviews

The second type of results collected relate to the judgmental information provided by current students in regards to the feelings of expectations they had coming into the program. The following are all the summarized points gathered.

- I. Students expected a “higher level of difficulty” in Honors classes. Numerous students remarked that the difficulty level of Honors classes varied. It not only varied across departments, but also across colleges.
- II. Students expected a “higher level” of professor-student interaction. Like the difficulty described above, the quality and amount of professor-student interaction varied greatly. In some classes, the professor was highly accessible in and out of the classroom, where in other cases, they barely introduced themselves to the class or bothered to learn students names.
- III. It is stated in the literature that Honors classes “average fewer than 25 students.” While this number could be factual, students felt as though lower-

level honors classes that are considered General Education Curriculum courses (GECs) and that are popular among students often have more than 25 students per class. While professors try not to admit more than 25 students, they often stretch that number to 30. Increased numbers translate to a worse student-instructor ratio.

- IV. Students feel as though they expected to do as well or better in Honors classes. Student expected to benefit from the smaller instructor-student ratio.
- V. Students expected research opportunities in every field. Many of the students interviewed were not engaged in research, but those who were had mixed reactions. Some found it difficult and “cumbersome” to find a topic and advisor. Research opportunities are not offered as widely in all colleges. The noticeable complaint however was the lack of support and training regarding research writing in general. Some colleges require specific classes, while others offer nothing at all.
- VI. Students assumed that they must take honors classes to maintain Honors status. Depending on the college, programs requirements vary. This important information was not relayed during recruitment or orientation.
- VII. Students expected at least 2 Honors classes in their respective majors. Students were surprised and frustrated to find a lack of Honors classes in their individual specialty or field of study.
- VIII. Students expected at least 3 upper-level Honors classes available to take as GECs.

- IX. Students expected to live in Honors residence halls. Honors residence halls are guaranteed if students apply before February of the entering year. Most of the students had this expectation and it was met.
- X. Students expected “study-friendly” environments in the residence halls. For the most part, students expectations were met on this point.
- XI. Students expected knowledgeable resident assistants. Because resident assistants in Honors residence halls are not required to be Honors students themselves, numerous students interviewed felt as though they were not the best equipped to address concerns specific to Honors students.
- XII. Students also expected that all the students who live in Honors residence halls were Honors students; this is not the case. However, it did not detrimentally affect the environment.
- XIII. Academic advising sparked a lot of discussion among the students interviewed. The quality of the advising ranged from extremely good to extremely poor. It can be said that one never knows what to expect; advising at OSU is consistently inconsistent.
- XIV. Students with Honors status receive priority scheduling. Students love this and it is a huge selling point for a large school like OSU. Unless Honors status is lost, students were never disappointed on this one.
- XV. Students also discussed the availability of academic advisors. They found the process frustrating at times, but for the most part, the students arranged their schedules to meet the necessary need.

- XVI. Students expected opportunities for peer interaction with other Honors students. Students were satisfied on this point.
- XVII. A small minority of students interviewed expected experienced Honors Peer Mentors. For those who took advantage of the opportunity, they were satisfied.
- XVIII. Students expected special programming for Honors students. The Honors & Scholars Center was found to offer sufficient programming to satisfy the students' expectations.
- XIX. Students expected access to Honors resources and facilities. Students commented how "Kuhn" was usually accessible and offered a "nice" atmosphere to meet and study in.
- XX. Students expected further contact and follow-up from Honors staff. The students interviewed believed the staff is accessible if needed, but commented they did not go out of their way to follow-up with students. After a few months at OSU, many students realized that they had to fend for themselves. They did not, however, expect "hand-holding" from the Honors staff who they came in contact with during recruitment.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The Ohio State University Honors Program should adapt “Realistic Job Preview” concepts in the recruitment of Honors students, calling it “Realistic College Preview.” Adapting these concepts proactively (before a turnover problem develops) will lead to lower turnover and better adapted students. To review the decisions made in Chapter 3 regarding the “10 tough choices,” the recommendations are made as a proactive measure in response to the increased importance of recruiting and retaining Honors students in response to the Academic Plan; the diagnosis was unstructured with information obtained through formal and informal interviews, personal anecdotes, and experiences; the content should be judgmental to reflect “reality”; the content should be intensive, so that the program can still be sold, but students are still given enough information to make an informed decision facilitating self-selection; the chosen presentation medium should be written and one-to-one, taking advantage of the best of both worlds; the message will be delivered by incumbents (current Honors students); the “Realistic College Preview” will be given early in the process in order to optimize the time students have to make informed college decisions; the concepts should be implemented as policy because a study would waste time and money and due to the number of incoming students, would not yield results backing up the suggestions and research; and finally, it is recommended that Ohio State Honors begin tracking the recruitment and retention of Honors students. In addition to tracking OSU results, it is also suggested that OSU benchmark itself against other institutions.

What should it look like? Now that everything is outlined, here is the concrete suggestions, including the actual “realistic information” that should be added.

I. Enlist Peer Mentors early in the process. Current students are the best and most credible sources of information for incoming students. Peer mentors, or perhaps a new group of current Honors Students, can be assigned National Merit, National Achievement, and National Hispanic Scholars. Since this is the most heavily recruited group, it is also has the potential to have the highest turnover or dissatisfaction rates. Preferably, students’ academic interest could be matched. The potential students could be matched at National Merit Day, where they would discuss their experience at OSU with current students. They would be available for questions and concerns. At the first meeting, the pair could determine the best method of communication.

The specific information to be addressed includes: the difficulty of Honors classes and the quality of the professor-student interaction as perceived by the current student. The Peer Mentor would also be advised to speak to specific Honors programming and access to Honors resources and facilities.

In addition to assigning Peer Mentors to the group described above, it is also suggested that students can select to be contacted by such a person. Potential students, especially those who cannot or do not opt for a campus tour, could benefit greatly from this personal attention.

The training of these Peer Mentors would be very important, especially training on the exact purpose of their interaction. It should also be noted that current students should relate stories but make sure the potential students is aware that every experience is unique at OSU. Students can also share the coping mechanisms they developed.

II. During the housing tour given by the Honors Ambassador, it is recommended that the guides talk more specifically about the resident advisors and what to expect from them, the availability of quiet study space, the existence of non-honors students in the halls, and the consequences of not signing up before the cut-off date (currently February 15th). In addition, it would also be helpful to the new recruits to know about the culture of each residence hall, as well as the perceived differences between North, South, and West campus. They can also describe their experiences in Ohio State Honors.

This topic is vast and college recruitment will become more important as selection becomes more competitive and schools vie for the top students. It is suggested that Ohio State Honors review the current process and materials to make sure they are current and accurate. It is also important that a formal process is put into place that includes a bi-annual review of the effectiveness of the process. In addition, only through tracking progress can results be shown and improvements be suggested and implemented. It is important that other schools processes are reviewed for benchmarking purposes, as well as suggestions.

In regards to the other information gained from the interviews, it is suggested that students receive the information during Orientation or Survey class in the Fall Quarter of their freshman year. With the disintegration of University College and the implementation of new advising programs, as well as increased direct college enrollment, problems regarding advising will hopefully be addressed.

Students' expectations regarding The Ohio State University were not evaluated; however, they do play an important part in a student's decision; for example, the difficulty navigating the University due to its perceived size. Those expectations are

beyond the scope of this research. One staff member remarked that the myths regarding Ohio State often deter a student's decision. He feels the myths are corrected when students visit. It would be wise for an evaluation to be conducted of the larger campus concerns; possible coping mechanisms could also be presented. The Ohio State University has many great resources available to students, but often the burden of responsibility falls on the individual student – there is no hand-holding here.

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Premack, SL and Wanous, John. A meta-analysis of realistic job preview experiments. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 70, 709-719. 1985

Wanous, John P. "Installing A Realistic Job Preview: Ten Tough Choices." *Personnel Psychology* v42n1 Spring 1989

www.osu.edu/academicplan.html

HONORS VISIT REQUEST FORM

One of the best ways to gather information about a university is to visit its campus, meet staff and students, and learn about the programs it offers. If you are interested in visiting Ohio State, please complete the information below and return this form as soon as possible to the University Honors & Scholars Center, 220 West 12th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210. If we are not able to schedule a visit for you through the University Honors & Scholars Center, we will forward your visit request to Ohio State's Visitor Center.

We Request at Least a Three-Week Notice to Schedule Your Visit

Name _____ Today's Date _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____ Social Security Number ____ / ____ / ____
(Best time to reach?) _____

E-mail Address _____

High School Name _____ Year of Graduation _____

Your Class Size _____ Your Class Rank _____

ACT Composite _____ SAT Combined _____

Are you a National Achievement/National Merit/National Hispanic Semi-Finalist? _____ Finalist? _____

We schedule visits Monday through Friday only.

Visits may be scheduled during the following periods: September 27-December 1 and December 11-December 15, 2000; January 9-March 9; April 2-June 1; June 25-September 7, 2001.

We are not able to schedule visits on University Holidays (2000: November 10, 23, and 24, and December 25 and 26; 2001: January 1 and 15, May 28, July 4, September 3) or on National Merit Day (November 3, 2000) or University Scholar Maximus Competition Days (February 16, 17, 23, and 24, 2001).

In order to accommodate the large number of seniors making their college decisions by May 1, we are unable to schedule juniors during the month of April. Seniors who wish to visit after May 1 are encouraged to wait until the summer Honors orientation program.

Preferred Date for Visit _____

Arrival and Departure Times _____ Total number of people visiting _____

Specific Academic Interest(s) _____

An Honors visit includes an Honors Overview with one of our University Honors & Scholars Center staff members and a tour of one of the five Honors residence halls with a current student. Please indicate below *in priority order* those additional appointments you would like scheduled. Your schedule will include the requested appointments, time and availability permitting.

_____ Academic Area as Specified Above (1 hour) _____ Admissions Campus Tour (2 hours)

University Honors & Scholars Center, Kuhn Honors & Scholars House, 220 West 12th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210

(614) 292-3135 www.honors.ohio-state.edu

For Office Use Only Initials _____

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY HONORS & SCHOLARS CENTER

Application for Honors Affiliation

General Information and Criteria for Affiliation

We encourage all students interested in participating in Honors to complete this application. There are a variety of ways in which students qualify for the Honors affiliation. *Please note that we do take factors beyond class rank and test scores into consideration in our assessment of your eligibility.*

Criteria

Membership in Ohio State Honors is available to incoming freshmen who have received a 29 ACT or 1300 SAT in combination with a class rank in the top 10 percent of their high school class. Students who apply for and accept the Honors designation will not be eligible for the Scholars Programs.

Optional Essay and Transcript

Students who do not meet the above guidelines are invited to apply by providing a copy of the most recent high school transcript and an additional essay (explained on the last page of this application) that describes other significant indicators of the potential for high academic achievement. This essay will be used to assist decision making only in cases where the aforementioned criteria are not met.

Housing

This form also serves as your application to live in an Honors residence area should you be interested in such housing.

Transfer Students

Affiliation is also available to transfer students. Please fill out all applicable sections, including Section IV on page 3.

Current Ohio State Students

Ohio State students who are already enrolled in degree-granting colleges should consult their college offices. Current Ohio State students who are enrolled in University College may complete this form.

Deadlines

The Honors application deadline is June 15.

For priority consideration for Honors housing, your completed Honors application must be received no later than February 15.

How to Apply

1. Apply to Ohio State

Apply for admission to The Ohio State University.

2. Apply to Honors

Return this completed application for Honors affiliation, and if necessary (see the "Optional Essay and Transcript" section at left), a copy of your most recent transcript (this does not have to be an official copy), and optional essay as soon as possible to the University Honors & Scholars Center, Kuhn Honors & Scholars House, 220 West 12th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43210. We will send you a postcard to acknowledge receipt of your application.

3. University Honors & Scholars Center reviews and sends letter

Upon review of your completed application and your admission to the university, you will receive a letter regarding your status with Ohio State Honors. This will take approximately four weeks from the date of receipt of your application.

Please feel free to call, e-mail, and/or visit the University Honors & Scholars Center.

If you would like more information about Honors, we would be pleased to assist you in any way we can.

University Honors & Scholars Center
Kuhn Honors & Scholars House
220 West 12th Avenue
Columbus, OH 43210
Phone: (614) 292-3135
Fax: (614) 292-6135
osuhons@osu.edu
www.honors.ohio-state.edu

Honors Ambassador Interpersonal Tip Sheet

Remember: Your first responsibility as an Ambassador is to create an environment that will make the prospective student and his/her family feel good about Ohio State. It has been our experience that a student chooses OSU more on a “feeling” created during a tour than on any actual facts presented during the tour. The following are tips for generating and facilitating this positive environment. Many may seem obvious, but their importance to the recruitment effort of Honors Ambassadors cannot be overemphasized.

Interpersonal Skills:

- Introduce yourself with a firm handshake while establishing eye contact.
- Smile.
- Remember the name of the student. Use it often in the course of conversation.
- Speak mainly to the student rather than the parents.
- Ask questions and lots of them. (*You are not simply a tour guide*)
- Ask open-ended questions. (see samples below)
- Look for a common interest or experience you share with the student. (*Making a college decision is always an easy one*)
- Feel free to use personal stories and anecdotes.
Remember, however, to convey to the student that everyone's experience at OSU is unique and not necessarily the same as yours.
- “I don’t know” is an acceptable answer. You can, however, help them find the answer.
- Refrain from making negative comments about other schools.
- Don’t hesitate to offer your e-mail or phone number at the end of the tour.

Note: For 40 minutes your goal is to become the prospective student’s “friend.” Don’t overdo it, but try and connect on as personal a level as possible in the short period of time.

Sample Questions:

It is good to center the conversation on OSU and Honors, but it need not be limited to it.

- Where are you from? What’s your high school like?
- What do you like to do? Hobbies? Sports?
This is a good lead in to talk about extracurriculars. If they like sports, talk about intramurals. If they like to write, talk about the Lantern. Remember one of their hobbies. If there is a lull in the conversation you can ask them more about it. People love to talk about their hobbies.
- Why are you interested in The Ohio State University?
- What concerns do you have about college?
- What concerns do you have about Ohio State?
- What do you know about the Honors Program?
- What other colleges and universities are you considering attending? What aspects of these other institutions do you find attractive?
- What are your general impressions of The Ohio State University? Of the Honors Program?

***PLEASE REMEMBER TO ARRIVE 5 MINUTES PRIOR TO THE START OF YOUR TOUR
AND BE SURE TO SIGN IN DOWNSTAIRS IN THE WORKROOM (003 KUHN).***

THE RESIDENCE HALLS...*your cheat sheet :)*

Taylor

- North Campus Area
- Men and Women Live in different rooms on the same floor
- Men-only and Women-only floors available
- Rooms can have 2, 3, or 4 occupants
- All rooms are air-conditioned and contain a bathroom
- Study Lounges throughout building
- Laundry facilities on top floor (penthouse)
- Weight room, music room, recreational area, and computer lab in basement/piano on first floor
- 2000-2001 Cost for 4-person room is \$1354 /quarter

Haverfield

- North Campus area
- Men-only or Women-only floors
- Rooms can have 2, 3, or 4 occupants
- All rooms are air-conditioned and contain a bathroom
- Study Lounge in basement/piano in first floor lounge
- Laundry and mail facilities shared with Blackburn
- 2000-2001 Cost for 4-person room is \$1354 /quarter

Bradley

- South Campus area
- Men and Women occupy different rooms on the same floor (divided by wings)
- Rooms have 1-4 occupants (most have 2) and most share same sex corridor bathroom
- Study Lounges on each floor/piano on first floor
- Laundry facilities, music room, bicycle storage, weight room in basement
- Academic Year Housing (stays open during breaks)
- Cost for 2-person room is \$1338 / quarter

Siebert

- South Campus area
- Men-only or Women-only floors
- Rooms have 1, 2, or 4 occupants (most have 2) and common bathroom on floor
- Study Lounges on each floor
- Laundry facilities, weight room, music room with piano, recreation area in basement
- Academic Year Housing (stays open during breaks)
- Early Admissions Program (EAP)
- 2000-2001 Cost for 2-person room is \$1338 / quarter

Lincoln

- Northwest Campus area
- Men and Women occupy different suites on the same floor
- Suites have clusters of 3 or 4 rooms (usually 2 people to one room) with a common bathroom and living area
- All rooms are air conditioned
- Floors 17-23 are honors living-learning environments
- Floor 16 is African-American living-learning environment
- Laundry facilities on each floor
- Study Lounges, recreation area, music room with piano on floor 16
- 2000-2001 Cost for 2-person room in suite is \$1555 / quarter

In general

- All residence halls are smoke-free
- All residence halls come with local phone service, cable TV, Microfridge, and ResNet (a high speed dedicated computer connection from your residence hall room to the Internet and OSU's network)